

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1998

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NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
801 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON DC 20576

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# GIS — A NEW TOOL FOR PLANNING

**KEEPING TRACK OF** where streets, buildings, and utilities are and who owns them is a key task for local government. In

the Nation's Capital, where the federal government owns 40 percent of the land (including a significant number of streets), this mapping responsibility has been shared for the past 25 years by NCPC and the District of Columbia. But traditional maps—the kinds that are difficult to produce and out-of-date before the ink is dry—no longer meet the needs of modern cities. A computer technology known as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is transforming the way we view and analyze the world around us. Digital maps linked to databases are providing the accurate information we need to manage our communities, run our businesses, and protect our resources. NCPC has led the effort to form a public/private Consortium to establish an integrated GIS network in the National Capital Region.

The GIS network is designed to capture, display, and analyze geographically based data for planning and management. The system digitally integrates images of streets, buildings, sidewalks, and other physical elements of the built environment with information about zoning, property ownership, utility services, traffic patterns, etc. By giving managers the information they need in a format they can use, GIS technology speeds decision making and saves the government money. A fully integrated GIS network in Washington will improve the planning and management of federal facilities and support local economic revitalization.

The Commission has completed a GIS pilot study in the area extending from the Capitol, south along South Capitol Street to Anacostia Park. The Consortium members are using pilot study information to prepare economic development plans for the South Capitol/M Street, SE Corridor and will soon let a major database development contract that will extend these GIS capabilities to the rest of the city.

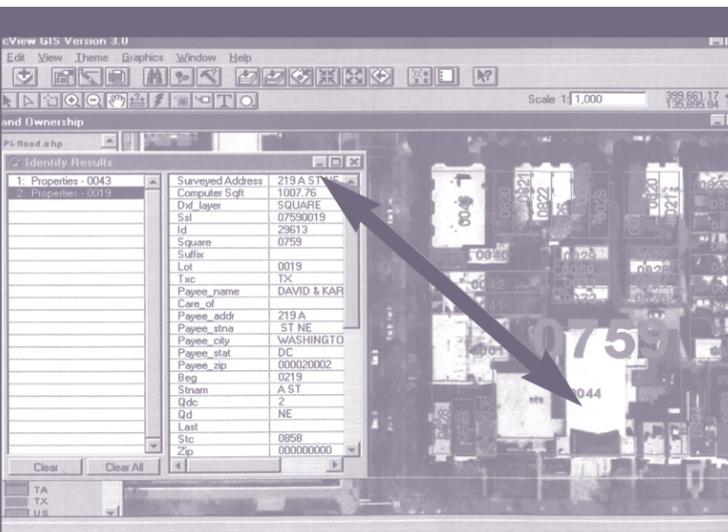
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMBINE THE UTILITY OF COMPUTER DATABASES WITH THE POWER OF MAPS.

DIGITAL MAPS LINKED TO DATABASES ARE PROVIDING THE ACCURATE INFORMATION WE NEED TO MANAGE OUR COMMUNITIES, RUN OUR BUSINESSES, AND PROTECT OUR RESOURCES.

The GIS Consortium partners are already applying the technology to a variety of management tasks. Using these new digital capabilities, the Police Department is speeding its response time to 911 emergency calls, the U.S. Department of Justice is enhancing its presentation of court case evidence, and the D.C. Department of Public Works is improving street maintenance. In a joint venture with Microsoft Corporation, the U.S. Geological Survey has launched TerraServer, a World Wide Web-based databank of high-resolution geographic images that are available at no charge to the public. The business owners in the area surrounding the MCI Center, who have organized themselves into the Downtown Business Improvement District, are also GIS partners and are using the new mapping technology to track trash collection, traffic flow, and street light maintenance.

GIS and its related computer aided design (CAD) applications are the new tools of planning and NCPC is applying them to a variety of its core activities. Commission planners are using GIS to analyze potential sites for future museums and memorials beyond the traditional Monumental Core and in all quadrants of the city. In assessing these possible sites with their geospatial tools, planners are able to analyze the proximity of historic and environmental resources, the effect of height limitations, the availability of public transit, and the anticipated economic impact of federal development on the local community. In CAD applications NCPC planners are building three-dimensional animated models of major development projects that assist Commissioners and staff in visualizing and evaluating proposals. For example, staff has built a detailed computer model of the proposed World War II Memorial to assess its bulk and mass and its impact on the Mall's historic open spaces and vistas.

GIS is revolutionizing the way cities are designed, built, and managed and the Commission looks forward to advancing the GIS Consortium in the Nation's Capital.



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND THE NEW CONVENTION CENTER



HISTORIC PRESERVATION MEASURES WILL HELP INTEGRATE THE NEW WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER INTO THE MOUNT VERNON SQUARE / SHAW COMMUNITY. Courtesy Dan Harmon and TVS/Devroux and Purnell/Mariani, PLLC

**SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATING** A large development project into an established neighborhood is often a challenge to developers, elected officials, planning authorities, and those who live and work in the surrounding community. When the project has a significant federal interest component, as the new Washington Convention Center does, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) provides a powerful tool to achieve this integration. NHPA requires that the federal government, historic preservation organizations, and the public work together to find ways to mitigate potential damage to historic properties caused by new development. Because of its review role, NCPC was the federal agency responsible for conducting this consultation process, commonly known by its location in the regulations as Section 106.

The consultation results from the federal agency's determination about the likely effect of the project on the integrity and character of the historic resources in the surrounding community. The resources, usually historic structures or archaeological sites, must be eligible for or already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

If the effects of the proposed development are adverse (as they were found to be in the case of the convention center), the agency must consult with interested parties to find ways to mitigate or avoid the adverse effects on historic properties. Interested parties are people who have knowledge of the historic resources or who might be affected by the loss of the resources, such as those who live and work near the development. Agreements about ways to protect historic properties are usually memorialized through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

[A HISTORIC PROPERTIES AGREEMENT] CAN TAKE MANY FORMS AND IS TAILORED TO THE SPECIFIC CONDITIONS OF EACH PROJECT.

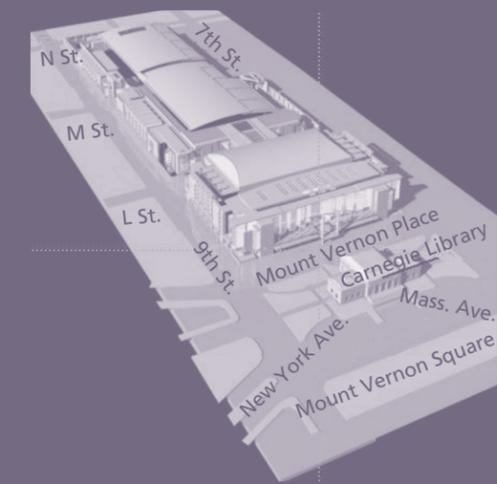
An MOA is a planning document. It can take many forms and is tailored to the specific conditions of each project. It usually describes the ways in which the historic resources will be protected, maintained, or reinforced. If historic resources are to be lost, it explains how they will be documented or interpreted for the public.

The District of Columbia's proposed site for the new convention center was the Mount Vernon Square site in an area with a long social, architectural, and planning history. The site is surrounded by historic districts and landmarks and covers L'Enfant Plan streets. NCPC invited nearby residents, business owners, and churches to join in consultation, along with affected Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, community organizations, and professional groups. These concerned citizens volunteered their time over a period of almost six months, meeting over three dozen times with public officials and representatives of the Washington Convention Center Authority (WCCA), to find ways to preserve the historic resources in the area. The results of these discussions are reflected in the MOA that was signed in September 1997.

Among the historic preservation planning agreements in the MOA are:

- repairs to the Carnegie Library and Mount Vernon Square;
- excavation, or "data recovery" of archaeological resources from the site;
- streetscape improvements to some nearby blocks of the neighborhood;
- completion of a retail study to determine what kinds of businesses will be beneficial to the neighborhood and to conventioners;
- the survey and landmark nomination of the nearby blocks not already listed in the National Register, with the results being submitted to the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) for local debate and decisions;
- a demolition moratorium, passed by the District of Columbia Council, that delays the issuance of demolition permits for unprotected historic buildings in the area until the HPRB can determine if the area should become a historic district with protection under the local historic preservation ordinance;
- a fund of \$1 million to be used either for grants or for loans to assist owners of historic properties in the immediate area in making exterior improvements to their properties.

This fund will be managed by WCCA under criteria to be established by many of the same neighborhood and professional organizations that participated in the negotiations. Thus, these stakeholders will continue to have a role in how the historic structures in the neighborhood will be preserved into the foreseeable future.



THE CEREMONIAL ENTRANCE OF THE CONVENTION CENTER FACES MOUNT VERNON SQUARE AND THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY AND BISECTS THE HISTORIC 8TH STREET ACCESS. TVS/Devroux and Purnell/Mariani, PLLC

# PROCEEDINGS

This issue of the Quarterly summarizes actions taken at the Commission meetings on October 1, November 5, and December 3, 1998. Additional information on individual projects may be obtained by contacting the National Capital Planning Commission, 801 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20576 or by calling (202) 482-7200.

## U.S. COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Washington, D.C.

October 1, 1998

In approving the concept of an annex to the U.S. Courthouse at the intersection of Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues, NW, the Commission has paved the way for the introduction of a significant new building addition in the heart of Washington's Monumental Core. Located between Third Street, NW on the west and John Marshall Park and the Canadian Embassy on the east, the courthouse was completed in 1952 and is an example of the "stripped classicism" so prevalent in Washington at mid-century. At this early conceptual stage, the Commission approved an addition on the east side of the courthouse that complements but is distinct from the architectural character of the existing building and that includes a prominent cylindrical component fronting Constitution Avenue.

To be constructed on an existing parking lot, the proposed addition will consist of three, six-story building wings and an atrium connecting the old and new structures. The main rectangular wing will be linked to a cylindrical element extending forward of the south wall of the current courthouse into existing open space and

to within 30 feet of Constitution Avenue. The upper floors of the new annex will house courtrooms, office space, and judges'

chambers. The street-level atrium will be open to the public and the basements will provide parking for 250 cars. The existing vehicular entrance on Constitution Avenue will be redesigned as a landscaped public plaza. The number of employees in the expanded building will increase from 650 to 925 by 2008.

In reviewing new construction projects in the Monumental Core, the Commission scrutinizes their potential intrusion on existing open space and views along the major ceremonial corridors. To assist the Commission in its courthouse review, staff prepared computer aided animated models to assess the proposed building in its surrounding urban design context and to illustrate its effects on the views along Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues. Based on these models, the Commission approved the design concept, building footprint and massing and looks forward to reviewing the design for the building facades in the next stage of its consideration of the project.

The courthouse is the seat of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which is often considered to be the second highest court in the United States. Commissioners urged project designers to achieve a design that is worthy of the building's important function and premier location and that rises to the standard of the best architecture along "America's Main Street."

## NEW CONVENTION CENTER

Washington, D.C.

December 3, 1998

After years of planning, construction of a new Washington Convention Center on Mount Vernon Place has received the green light from the Commission. In approving the final site and building plans, the Commission has reaffirmed its conviction that the new facility will capture a significant share of the national convention market and will fuel new retail and commercial activity in the downtown area.

The 2.1 million-square-foot structure is sited on three separate-but-connected city blocks stretching from Mount Vernon Place on the south to N Street on the north, and from 7th Street on the east to 9th Street on the west. A second-story glass pedestrian bridge spanning L Street and an underpass at M Street permit both

requests, project designers have lowered the roof elevation, in some places as much as eight feet; significantly increased the amount of glass in the building, especially along 7th and 9th Streets; and redesigned the 7th and 9th Street elevations to provide more texture and variety.

note to printer: new replacement image to come, tues.



■ a study to identify retail opportunities that would benefit both the new facility and the adjacent community. As a result of this retail study, the new convention center will include one-third more space for shops than originally proposed.

A THREE-STORY GLASS CYLINDER IS A DESIGN FEATURE ALONG THE 9TH STREET FAÇADE OF THE CONVENTION CENTER BETWEEN M AND N STREETS.

Courtesy TVS/Devroux and Purnell/Mariani, PLLC

streets to remain open to vehicular traffic. The center's ceremonial entrance is located on Mount Vernon Square facing the historic Carnegie Library. The height of the building varies from 120 feet at its highest elevation over the

grand ballroom, to 90 feet at Mount Vernon Place and M Street, and to 40 feet at N Street. The building materials are primarily limestone, pre-cast concrete, and clear glass with granite and brick accents.

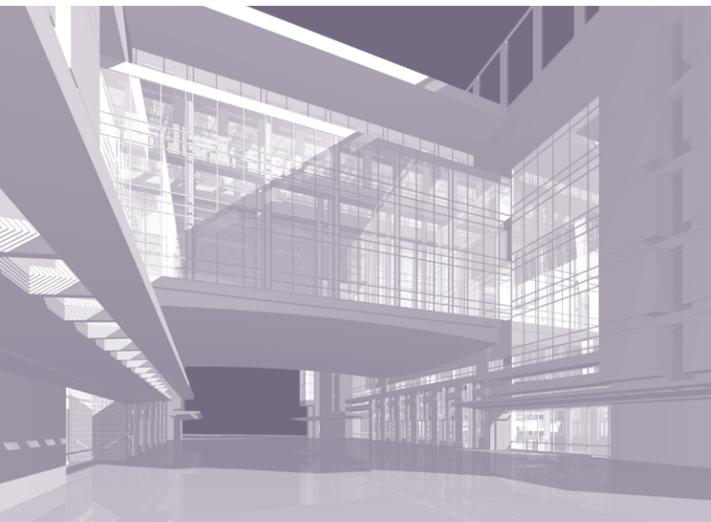
■ a design that encourages street-level pedestrian activity around the center. In response, the WCCA design team has provided street-level access to the center's restaurant and cafe on the 7th and 9th Street corners of Mount Vernon Place and additional 7th, 9th, and N Street entrances to the convention center itself and its retail shops.

The impact of convention center-related truck traffic has been a subject of considerable concern to the Commission and those who live and work in the Mount Vernon/Shaw neighborhood. Trucks will enter and exit the building on the north side of M Street between 7th and 8th Streets. Trucks will travel west on L Street to 9th Street, and north on 9th to M Street. No trucks need travel north of M Street. All loading docks are internal to the building and trucks will arrive at pre-determined intervals from an off-site marshaling yard. On 7th, 9th, and N Streets, screen walls of varying design, some planted with vines and shrubs, and some featuring innovative ceramic "fritted" glass panels will shield surrounding buildings from the noise and view of truck operations.

When the Commission reviewed the project at its preliminary stage in September 1997, it requested the Washington Convention Center Authority (WCCA) to make a number of design and planning revisions to better integrate this very large structure into the more modestly scaled residential and commercial neighborhood that surrounds it. During the past year the Commission, staff, and the project design team have worked together to achieve a final plan that meets the Commission's requirements. Among the revisions the Commission requested were:

■ a reduction in the mass of the building, an increase in the transparency of the building, and the redesign of several facades to make them more in scale and character with nearby buildings. In response to these

In its action on the final plans, the Commission withheld approval of two elements of the submission: the pylons, located at the ceremonial entrance on Mount Vernon Place and the landscape design and streetscape plans. The Commission will review the pylons and the landscape and streetscape designs when WCCA submits



A SECOND-FLOOR PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE EXTENDS OVER L STREET AND CONNECTS THE GRAND LOBBY WITH THE UPPER EXHIBIT HALLS.

Courtesy TVS/Devroux and Purnell/Mariani, PLLC.

the final plans for these elements. The Commission also requested project designers to consider strengthening the design of the N Street façade to better reflect the 8th Street access and provide more variety in the repetitive bays that screen the truck operations. In addition, the Commission requested that WCCA, prior to the opening of the center, submit for Commission review a transportation parking and operations plan, the proposed site for a truck marshaling yard, and the proposed signage plan.

Under the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, NCPC has served as the lead federal agency to find ways to mitigate the adverse effects that construction of the convention center will have on the Mount Vernon/Shaw community. Beginning in September 1996, NCPC has consulted extensively with WCCA, historic preservation authorities, the District of Columbia government, professional architecture and planning representatives, and concerned citizens to require WCCA and federal and city agencies to undertake certain mitigating actions. These required mitigation measures, stipulated in a Memorandum of Agreement and agreed to by all the affected parties, are described on Page 4, Public Participation, Historic Preservation, and the New Convention Center.

Groundbreaking ceremonies have already been held and construction will take at least four years; completion is tentatively scheduled for March 2003.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATION ANTENNAS AND TOWER

Washington, D.C.

October 1, 1998

To support the District of Columbia Public Safety Communications Center's program to upgrade the city's 911 emergency response system, the Commission approved the installation of a total of 20 antennas at four Washington, D.C. locations, including one new antenna tower on the grounds of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. The existing system, which processes an average of 4,450 emergency and non-emergency calls a day, has inadequate geographic coverage resulting in "dead spots" and unacceptably long response times. Five antennas (four transmitting and one receiving) will be installed at each of the four following locations:

- on the existing Hughes Memorial Tower, 6001 Georgia Avenue, NW;
- on the rooftop of the Concentrated Care Center of Georgetown University Hospital, 3800 Reservoir Road, NW;
- on the rooftop of the Capital View Plaza (a senior citizens' residence operated by the District of Columbia Housing Authority), 5901 East Capitol Street, SE; and
- on a new antenna tower on the grounds of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, 2700 Martin Luther King Avenue, NE.

All the antennas are of the "whip" type—20 feet in height and six inches in diameter. The District of Columbia has completed sight line studies to determine the visual impact of the tower at the St. Elizabeth's site and has notified the affected Advisory Neighborhood Councils in Ward 8. In its federal interest review, the Commission judged the visual impact of the tower and antennas at all four locations to be outweighed by the public safety benefits. Motorola has certified that its antennas will meet or exceed the radio frequency radiation guidelines for public safety established by the Federal Communications Commission.

The Commission approved the new antennas and tower for a period not to exceed five years, at which time the entire project must be resubmitted for Commission review. In commenting on the proposal, the Commission noted that the 761-foot Hughes Memorial Tower was constructed in 1988 without its prior approval and reiterated its continuing concern about the effect of the tower on the views of the major monuments and memorials in the Nation's Capital.

## OTHER COMMISSION ACTIONS

### BELTSVILLE MAIN POST OFFICE, RHODE ISLAND AVENUE AND ST. MARY'S STREET, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND.

The Commission approved the location and program for the new post office, and requested the Postal Service to submit analyses of parking and design impacts, preserve buffering trees, and continue consultations with County planning staff and interested citizens. (10/1/98)

### DAMASCUS MAIN POST OFFICE, NORTH WOODFIELD ROAD (MD ROUTE 124) AT DAMASCUS CENTRE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND.

The Commission approved the location and program for the new post office and requested the Postal Service to meet with the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission Design Review Committee and continue working on the proposed design with the Montgomery County planning staff and interested citizens. (12/3/98)

### DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, 15TH STREET AND PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Commission approved preliminary and final site and building plans for the north wing renovation of the Main Treasury Building. The work includes exterior cleaning and waterproofing, mortar repointing, fence and pavement repairs, and window sash replacement. (11/5/98)

### ENGLESIDE BRANCH POST OFFICE, 8588 RICHMOND HIGHWAY, FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

The Commission approved the location and program for the new post office and requested that in the preparation of preliminary site and building plans, the Postal Service submit a traffic analysis, adequately landscape the site, and provide buffering adjacent to residential development. The Commission further requested the Postal Service to coordinate with County officials the potential effect of planned Richmond Highway expansion. (10/1/98)

### FEDERAL CAPITAL BUDGET PROJECTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000 IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION.

In a report to the Office of Management and Budget, the Commission reported on proposed FY 2000 Capital Budget projects in the National Capital Region and recommended favorably on 64 proposed projects totaling nearly \$967 million. (10/1/98)

### GREENBELT MAIN POST OFFICE, HANOVER PARKWAY AND ORA GLEN DRIVE, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND.

The Commission approved the location and program for the post office and requested the Postal Service to continue to consult with County planning officials and interested citizens and prepare a technical analysis of parking impacts. (11/5/98)

### NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND.

The Commission approved the revised master plan for the NIST Annex and preliminary and final building plans for the renovation of Building 530 in its new use as a ballistic testing facility. The Commission requested that NIST consider planting more trees within the existing 20-foot security buffer to shield adjacent residential and commercial properties and to coordinate the project with the City of Gaithersburg and the Maryland Department of Environment. (12/3/98)

### PRESIDENT'S PARK, E STREET, NW, BETWEEN 15TH AND 17TH STREETS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Commission approved the revised preliminary and final site and building plans for security barriers along E Street and Hamilton and State Places, south of the South Lawn of the White House. The Commission approved the project's three elements: 1) construction of retaining walls, bollards, and gates; 2) four gatehouses; and 3) the realignment of a section of the roadway between E St, NW and west South Executive Avenue. (12/3/98)

## DELEGATED ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Commission, the Executive Director approved:

- Final site and building plans for the 26,400-square-foot Alexandria Branch Post Office, Kingstowne Boulevard and Barclay Drive, Fairfax County, Virginia. (11/27/98)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for construction of a terrace extension in the interior courtyard at the Dolly Madison/Cosmos/Tayloe Complex, Washington, D.C. (10/29/98)
- Preliminary and final site plan for landscape improvements to screen satellite dishes at the site of Building 409, which will be demolished, at Fort Myer, Arlington County, Virginia. (9/25/98)
- Final site and building plans for the Clinical Research Center Addition (Building 10), which was approved at the preliminary stage by the Commission in November 1997, at the National Institutes of Health Bethesda Campus, Montgomery County, Maryland. (9/25/98)
- Preliminary site and building plans for a picnic pavilion adjacent to the Mane Restaurant and next to the Olmsted Walk at the National Zoological Park, Washington, D.C. (9/25/98)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for the replacement of the portico to provide a more formal entrance to Building 17 at the Naval Security Station, Nebraska and Massachusetts Avenues, NW, Washington, D.C. (9/25/98)
- Final site and building plans for improvements to the Main Gate of the U.S. Naval Station Washington, Bolling/Anacostia Tract. (10/29/98)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for an addition to and renovation of Building 16 at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Main Section, Washington, D.C., with the understanding that landscaping will be provided around the outdoor storage area. (9/25/98)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for construction of an outdoor playground at the Fisher House, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Main Campus, Washington, D.C. (10/29/98)



THE NEW MAIN ENTRANCE TO NIH'S CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER, EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2002.  
*Courtesy Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership*

## THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REVIEWED THE FOLLOWING ZONING PROPOSALS AND CONCLUDED THAT THERE ARE NO FEDERAL INTERESTS IN THESE CASES

- Zoning Case 98-6/95-8, a proposed amendment that automatically extends the approval period for a Planned Unit Development when the project is in litigation, does not affect the federal establishment, and is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. (11/5/98)
- Zoning Case 97-15(l), proposed amendments that eliminate unequal treatment of residential facilities for handicapped individuals and those designed for non-handicapped individuals. Spacing and size limits and special BZA approval for facilities serving handicapped individuals would no longer be needed. (12/3/98)

## COMMISSION NOTES

The Commission welcomes Deserene Worsley as Director of Technology Development and Applications. Ms. Worsley comes to the Commission from the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, where she served as Acting Executive Officer and most recently as Director of the Geographic Information Systems Group. Previously she was a Manager with Price Waterhouse and a Senior Consultant with the Information Technology Group of Booz, Allen and Hamilton. Ms. Worsley holds a B.S. degree in Computer Science from Duke University and an M.B.A. degree from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. In her new position Ms. Worsley will lead the Commission's Technology Development and Applications Team and its Washington Geographic Information Systems (WGIS) activities.

On November 24, 1998, NCPC Vice Chair, Dr. Patricia Elwood, represented the Commission at the grand opening of D.C. Link and Learn, a new computer and information technology training center located in Southwest Washington and designed to meet the needs of District of Columbia residents. As a Founding Partner of the training center, NCPC is supporting D.C. Link and Learn's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Institute and providing it with geo-spatial maps, data and products as well as technical advice on GIS and CAD training and career opportunities. For its part, the GIS Institute will be a source of skilled interns to supplement the NCPC staff and offer training and computer certification programs. The Commission welcomes the opportunity to help prepare District students for careers in advanced computer applications.

An exhibit illustrating how NCPC's Extending the Legacy Plan can preserve and enhance Washington's Monumental Core is on display in the Main Terminal of Washington Dulles International Airport until April 15, 1999.



NCPC'S EXHIBIT AT THE MAIN TERMINAL OF DULLES AIRPORT SHOWS HOW THE LEGACY PLAN WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF WASHINGTON'S VISITORS AND TOURISTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

NCPC QUARTERLY

Fall Quarter 1998

October 1, November 5,  
December 3, 1998

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal construction projects, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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